

RESTORATION REVIEW



I have been a disciple for fifty years, being brought up in "the strictest sect of the Pharisees." I have taught all the old arguments for many years. My difficult struggle has been in facing the Scriptures honestly. I sympathize with any who might be shocked by what I say. Once the light begins to break through, however, many other points will begin to breathe the fresh air of freedom in Christ.

— Cecil Hook in *Free In Christ*

See: *Silence Says Something*

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Volume 28, No. 8**Leroy Garrett, Editor****October 1986**

The Adventures of the Early Church. . .

SHEPHERDS AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. — Jer. 3:12

In reading the history of the early church in *Acts* it soon becomes apparent that elders (presbyters) played a significant role. While they are not mentioned by name until one has read more than one-third of the narrative (*Acts* 11:30), it becomes evident as the story unfolds that the presbytery is important to the development of the ecclesia. It is the elders of the church in Jerusalem that received donations for their poor from caring brethren in Antioch (11:30). That it was common if not the rule that each new congregation had elders is indicated in 14:28 where elders are said to be “ordained in every church.”

Moreover elders are seen as part of the decision-making process, for in one of the first crises in the early church the presbytery is gathered with the apostles (15:6) to deal with the problem. And it is noteworthy that “the brethren” were part of the conference and that the matter was settled only at the pleasure of “the whole church” along with apostles and elders. If we are looking for norms for our time in the life of the early church this should be one: *There is evidence in the New Testament that in decision-making the elders always acted in conjunction with the whole church.* Should we not have a compelling reason for doing otherwise? It underscores the people’s right to know what is going on and to share in the decisions that are made. If we should draw up a “Bill of Rights” for church members, this should be one of them.

The early church was dependent on the Old Covenant Scriptures for its understanding of who an elder was and what he was to be. The Jews who had become Christians were as aware of “the elders of Israel” as they were the elders of the ecclesia. There are four references to these elders of the old Jewish system in *Acts* before Christian elders are mentioned. Of the eighteen references to elders in *Acts* eight of them refer to the elders of Israel. The gospel records, of course, abound with such references, at least 25 of them, all of which refer to the elders of Israel. One grim reference tells how Jesus informed his disciples that he must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and be killed (Mk. 8:31).

Even more recent to the early Christians than the elders of the old Mosaic system were the elders of the Jewish synagogue, which stood as a kind of bridge between the ritual of the temple and the simplicity of the ecclesia. There was hardly any difference at all between the function and qualifications of the elders in the synagogue and those in the church. But the prototype for the elders of the synagogue was the elders in the Old Testament church.

The quotation above from Jeremiah can therefore serve as the thesis of this essay, that we do well to form our concept of the work of elders as much from the Old Testament as from the New Testament, and that the basic trait of the elder in the Old Testament is that of shepherd. That is a pregnant line in Jer. 3:15: “I will give them shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” That one passage comes near saying it all, for the elder is first of all God’s man, one after his own heart. Moreover he is a shepherd that feeds the sheep, and with great care, for it is with knowledge and understanding.

This is a continuing theme in Jeremiah, who is a prophet of hope as well as of doom. In fact the prophet sees the *bad* shepherds as one cause of the woe and the *good* shepherds as a reason for hope. “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture,” says the prophet in 23:12, and goes on to condemn them for not watching after the sheep. Then with a cry of hope Jeremiah assures the people that God will regather his scattered sheep from all the nations and bring them back to their folds where they will prosper. Then in 23:4 he says, “I will set shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall there be lacking.”

Jeremiah frequently names the *carnal* shepherds, those who were concerned only for themselves, as the cause of Israel’s fall, as in 50:6: “My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray.” And yet shepherds, the faithful ones who cared for the sheep, were essential to the prophet’s dream of renewal for Israel. “I will give them shepherds after my own heart” remains one of the great shafts of light in the Old Covenant Scriptures.

In their judgments against shepherds who were not faithful the prophets reveal what God expected of them. “Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?,” Ezekiel (34:1) asks in a woeful judgment. He refers to things they did for themselves, *but you do not feed the flock*, he complained. In the following verses he spells out what is involved in caring for

the sheep, which goes far in clarifying what the early Christians deemed to be the function of elders, whom they referred to as shepherds. Ezekiel's description is in Ezek. 34:4, and if we listed them as positive functions they would read as follows:

1. The shepherd strengthens the weak.
2. The shepherd heals the sick.
3. The shepherd binds up the broken hearted and brings back those who have wandered away.
4. The shepherd seeks out those that are lost.

It is noteworthy that this is what the prophet refers to as *ruling*, the only intimation in the Old Testament that the shepherd had an authoritative role. He says, "but with force and cruelty you have ruled them." We may deduce from this that they were to *rule* with kindness and friendly persuasion, or better still they ruled by teaching, encouraging, healing, and seeking out those who had strayed. There is no suggestion that "rule" or "authority" is in any way arbitrary or official. The shepherd had no authoritative office. He ruled only by serving. He led by being a servant.

But the most impressive picture in the pastoral passages of Ezekiel is that of God himself as the Shepherd. The prophet hears God say, "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out" (34:11), and "I will seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day" (34:12). That the vision of God as the faithful Shepherd is not an uncommon one in the Old Testament is evident from such passages as the famous 23rd Psalm: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

It may well be that our Lord was led by the prophecy of Ezekiel to identify himself as "the Good Shepherd" (Jn. 10:11). He fulfills the prophecy in that God acts as the Shepherd of his people through Jesus Christ.

Here we have the ultimate motivation for those who serve as pastors of God's people: *allow God and Christ to serve as shepherds through them*. If we have any question about the role of the presbytery in the church today, we can look to Christ and resolve that the elders of the church, as God's under-shepherds, should emulate the ways of the chief Shepherd. When elders function with the spirit of Christ in view, we will have far fewer leadership problems. Even though Jesus could lay claim to all authority in heaven and on earth he made it clear that he was in the world not to rule but to serve.

I have long been impressed with the statement made by Ludwig von Mises when he was asked what he would do should he be made dictator of the world. “Abdicate,” he said. That should be the attitude of our elders if they are ever tempted to be anything other than humble servants in the church. And once we see the prophetic view of the elders-shepherds in the Old Testament as teachers and servants, which was surely the view held by the early Christians since the old Scriptures were their only Bible, we can question a practice that makes business men the elders of the congregation.

We all know that elders can “run the church” without “feeding my flock.” Men can serve as something like corporate executives without even a semblance of the heart of a shepherd.

“I will make them shepherds after my own heart” is the lofty concept we should hold before those who would lead us. If we could call a moratorium on the use of the term “authority” in reference to our elders and employ terms like serving, shepherding, and pastoring instead it would do wonders for our crisis in leadership. Since the Scriptures nowhere describe the leaders of God’s people in authoritative terms, we have good reason for a moratorium. In fact the very opposite is the case, for when Jesus referred to the rulers among the Gentiles as those who “lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them,” he went on to say “It shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant” (Mk. 10:42-43).

To our shame we have to concede that it *is* so among us, for all too often “those in authority” and the “great ones” are elders and ministers. While the Son of God himself girded himself with a towel so as to serve our leaders take unto themselves titles and offices so as to rule. *It shall not be so among you!* is a mandate from the lips of our Lord that would revolutionize our thinking about “the eldership” if we would but listen. With Jesus as our example of leadership, we would reach for the towel more than for the gavel. We have far greater need for the heart of a shepherd than the skill of an executive. — *the Editor*



LET’S NOT CONFINE HIM TO A BOOK OR HISTORY

I like the tender story of the artist who had a deep love for his wife. When death claimed her he assuaged his grief by painting a likeness of her in his favorite setting. In the painting he had her seated in the front porch swing, framed by beautiful flowers. With his

work of art almost finished he rested himself in a nearby chair, and he fell asleep as he lingered over the likeness of the one who meant so much to him. As he slept he dreamed. The woman in the swing stepped down out of the picture and came near to the artist. Once awake he marvelled over the experience, that the woman he had created on canvas had come alive.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ can be like that. With pen rather than brush those who knew Jesus personally as a friend painted their portraits of him in words. And so we have him in a Book, a glorious gift indeed. We also have him in history, the most impressive figure of all human history. He really lived at one time in a lowly town called Nazareth. He walked the shores of Galilee and the dusty roads of Judea, dreaming of a reign of God upon earth. He died for those dreams. In overcoming death and giving mankind hope he was not only in history but he changed the course of history.

But we must not confine our Lord to a Book, however praiseworthy be that Book, or to history, for he is more than all books and all history.

Just as we cannot confine him to creeds or to ecclesiastical structures. He cannot be restricted to our doctrinal systems or our interpretations. Words about him, even his own words, however important, can mean only so much. They are like a painting upon a canvas. They are not in themselves life, for only he is life.

When the artist created the likeness of his wife it may have satisfied his memory but not his longing, for he still had only a piece of cloth and not his wife. His deepest need was satisfied only when she came alive, stepped out of the picture and drew near to him. A letter from one we love, however treasured, is still only words upon a page. When those words stir our hearts and quicken our minds so that the loved one comes alive once more and lives in our memory and imagination, then there is power in what is written.

We must allow Jesus to step out of the pictures and the structures that men have created of him and draw near to us. This involves far more than quoting a string of Bible verses. There is more to it than knowing the Bible narratives about Jesus. We can confine Jesus to scriptures and structures in the same way the artist's wife was confined to paint and cloth. In our dreams (imagination) he must come alive, step outside the Bible and make his home in our hearts.

I hope the reference to imagination is not too much for you, for it is the basis of all faith. Faith is imagination full grown. A man dreams of what his business might be, and after awhile we have IBM, DuPont, and General Motors — or McDonald's, which began with one runty store and a dream. We "imagine" what we might become, or we dream dreams for our children, and there are the Einsteins, the Shakespeares, and the Lincolns. Imagination lies behind all the great inventions.

By our imagination, which is a gift of God, Jesus is not confined to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well or to the disciples in Gethsemane. He can be with us in the home and at the office as much as he was with Peter, James, and John on the shores of Galilee. If the Samaritan woman talked to him we can too, and if he quietened the storms that raged in the lives of his disciples he will be with us amidst life's tumults. The old Scot who in his loneliness went so far as to place a chair at the table for his friend Jesus was drawing upon imagination which builds faith. The more we imagine his presence (practicing the presence of God!) the sooner we will truly believe that he is indeed with us.

The only way I know to practice the presence of God is to practice the presence of Christ. God is with us when Christ is with us. If we imagine Christ as with us when we make those dreadful trips to the cemetery and when we undergo surgery and when we play with children in the park, imagination will eventually become simple trusting faith. "I am with you always" is a promise that inspires a faith that reaches beyond the first century and beyond the printed page.

To redeem the world the God of heaven did not give us a book or an institution but a Person. That Person is alive now as ever before. He is as much with us, if we welcome his presence, as he has been with our sisters and brothers in ages past. He transcends time. Time is nothing, for he remains the same, yesterday, today, and forever. The picture we have of him in Scripture is a precious possession, but it remains no more than paper and ink until we allow him to step out of the picture and make his home in our hearts and rule as sovereign over our lives. — *the Editor*



Highlights in Restoration History ...

MATTERS OF FORBEARANCE

While we often refer to matters of faith and matters of opinion in recounting our origins and rehearsing our mottoes, we are hardly aware that the idea of “matters of forbearance” goes back to the very beginning of the Stone-Campbell movement.

Back in 1809 when Thomas Campbell was organizing the Christian Association of Washington and writing the *Declaration and Address*, he came up with the one slogan that apparently originated among our people, “Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.” When Campbell stated this as a principle for the unity efforts he had begun, some of his friends asked if this would not mean that they would have to repudiate infant baptism. While he at first conceded that if infant baptism was not found in Scripture, they could have nothing to do with it, he was later to equivocate by suggesting that it could be made a matter of forbearance.

While Father Campbell eventually decided to be immersed along with his son, which was in a sense a rejection of infant baptism, there is no evidence that he ever changed his mind about treating it as a matter of forbearance. He concluded that each person should determine for himself the validity of infant baptism and the propriety of the various forms of baptism, whether sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. For the sake of unity, he insisted, such questions about baptism would be left to private judgment. He saw them as belonging to the chapter of non-essentials and by no means as important as the great matters of faith and righteousness.

One of Campbell’s old friends who had come from Ireland before him, James Foster, chided him for his ambivalence, asking him if he could see himself any longer baptizing an infant in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Obviously stunned by the rebuke, Campbell’s face colored and he accused Foster of being “the most intractable person I ever met.”

But Campbell lived comfortably with the principle of forbearance in reference to baptism. He himself, baptized as an infant, was immersed as an adult, and Foster was right in that Campbell never again baptized an infant. He was doing what he advocated: *allow each one to decide for himself in the light of his own conscience.*

This means that Father Campbell repudiated infant baptism in terms of his own conscience before God, but he did not repudiate it in the sense of rejecting as Christians those who had only been sprinkled as infants. He accepted them and their baptism even while teaching what he believed to be the truth of believer’s baptism.

In explaining this Robert Richardson reveals an attitude that was unfortunately largely lost in the ongoing history of the Movement:

Ardently devoted as he was to the cause of Christian union, and convinced that some concessions were needed in the existing distracted state of the religious world, he continued to insist that this question, as well as certain others of a similar character, might safely be left to private judgment, and be retained for the sake of peace, as belonging to the chapter of “non-essentials,” and by no means so important as the great matters of faith and righteousness. (*Memoirs*, 1, p. 240)

What happened to Thomas Campbell’s conviction that some concessions are needed in an appeal for Christian union? We can make concessions without compromising truth, as Campbell’s own life indicates. There are questions about baptism that are not easily resolved. Sincere Christians see them differently. Let’s concede this and accept each other as equals in Christ in spite of differences on baptism. And all along we will bear witness both by our teaching and practice what we see to be the truth about baptism. This is the principle of forbearance.

In the above quotation Richardson may not mean that Thomas Campbell saw baptism as non-essential, but that it is not essential for us to agree on all the details. We can see baptism as a matter of forbearance. Each one should practice and teach what he believes to be right, and yet be forbearing toward those who differ with him. Campbell saw this as the way to unity.

It is obvious enough that Christians will never accept each other as equals, which is a mandate of Scripture, if they make unanimity of opinion about baptism a condition of that acceptance. There should be but one condition of acceptance: *faithfulness to Jesus Christ according to one’s ability and knowledge*. Differences are to be transcended by forbearing love. This is the basis of unity according to Eph. 4:2: “showing forbearance to one another in love.” Forbearance implies diversity. If unity must be based upon uniformity of opinion or exact doctrinal agreement, then there is nothing to forbear. Forbearance says something like *I love you and accept you anyway*.

Where do you draw the line? is the question often asked by those who suppose a unity based upon forbearing love would go too far and we would be “fellowshipping anybody and everybody.” I could not agree more that the line must be drawn, for otherwise

Christian faith has no meaning. The line should be drawn where the early Christians drew it, *loyalty to Jesus Christ*. When they died together in the Colosseum in Rome it was not doctrinal unanimity that bound them, but a common love and commitment to Christ.

Surely we can enjoy fellowship with any believer who would die along with us out of loyalty to Christ. If he would do that, then we should be able to make “matters of forbearance” of those things that might otherwise keep us separated. — *the Editor*



The Only Way to Christian Unity ...

THE FRIEND AT THE DOOR

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me. — Rev. 3:20

If you open the door to the Friend who knocks and invite him into the home of your heart, and if I do the same, then you and I will be of one heart and soul with that Friend. That is the only unity there is that has any meaning. That Friend is not going to barge in; he will not impose himself. He is a gentleman, but a certain kind of gentleman, for he is the Christ or the Anointed One of God. And so he is Lord and Savior. Even so we do not have to pursue him, which would make sense. But it is not a matter of reason but of grace. He pursues us, but with restraint. He *knocks* at the door of our hearts. We need only to open the door.

This is the glorious good news of the gospel. It is not by our initiative or will or effort or good works, but by God's grace. It is a matter of accepting the free gift that God gives. This is what makes the Christian faith different from all other world religions. Whether one is a Moslem or a Buddhist or a Shintoist or a Hindu, his religion is a matter of *effort*. He is to diligently seek after God or the gods. Such religions have no concept of a God who so loves humanity that, like “the Hound of Heaven,” he is in constant pursuit of man, driven by his magnanimous philanthropy.

Even we Christians, however, have difficulty in seeing that what God offers is “by grace and not by works.” In our pride we have a problem with a free gift, with no strings attached. We do not have to be good enough or smart enough or right enough in order to claim it. We only need to accept it. This quickens our pride. We want to do something to deserve it or to be worthy of it. And so we try harder to be good or to be right. We struggle

for a peace that never seems to come. And we grow tired of struggling. Many Christians are defeated and discouraged. Like the Moslem or the Hindu, they have to carry their religion as a burden rather than their religion carry them. Could it be that we who claim to be Christians have never done what is so simple and so basic to the Christian faith, *accept the free gift*? How many of us have opened the door and invited Jesus Christ into our hearts?

This blindness to the grace of God may account for our factions and divisions. We falsely assume that unity is achieved through intellectual understanding or through doctrinal agreement. We draw lines and withdraw fellowship over something we call *soundness*, but this has to do with our opinions and interpretations more than with one's relationship to Jesus Christ. Since we have not learned to find oneness in the free gift of God's grace we seek it in all sorts of doctrinal systems. This may create a cold and legalistic conformity but never the unity of the Spirit.

Jesus Christ is not simply the Friend but the transforming Friend. He changes our attitude toward things and people, and gives us not only a way of life but life itself. When we open the door of our heart and invite him into our inmost soul, life will be different. We will manifest a love that unites that which is divided. If Jesus is in *our* hearts and if he is in *their* hearts, we cannot help but be one together in him, and there is no other unity that is worthy of the name.

To appropriate the gift of Jesus Christ, as promised in Rev. 3:20, we may have to use our imagination. How else can we really open the door and allow Jesus to enter but by imagining him as with us in everyday life?

The business man can think of Jesus as sitting with him in his office and sharing in those crucial decisions that every business man has to make, and that imaginary presence will make the man aware of loving righteousness, doing justly, and walking humbly before God. The lonely widow can imagine Jesus at her side listening when there is no one else to talk to. We can see him at our side as we drive to work. We can sense his presence when we are too tired and discouraged even to pray. We know that he understands and that he is slow to condemn. Even when we have spoken harshly to a loved one or been short of temper we can imagine him standing near and softly saying something like, "What I see in you is the potential for a good and great soul."

And what begins with imagination ends in faith, for we will soon believe that the Friend is really with us. We do not drive alone; we are not at home alone; we do not go to bed alone; we do not face this cruel and troubled world alone. “I will be with you always, even unto the end of the age” was a promise made first to his special envoys, the apostles, but it is true for all who believe in him. He is with us! Is this not the heart of the Christian faith?

It is also the great lost secret to Christian unity. Give me two people who have invited Jesus into their hearts and I will give you two people who are united in Christ. Questions about baptism, church membership, and erroneous views that may be held are important matters that are to be dealt with within a loving fellowship of mutual acceptance. If we wait until all such issues are settled to everyone’s satisfaction, then unity will always elude us. Those disciples who responded to Jesus’ call “Follow me” were far from perfect in their understanding of things, but it was nonetheless their response to that call that made them followers of Christ (in spite of all their hangups!) and united with each other.

We don’t have to understand everything about a gift in order to receive it, and we may even have misconceptions about it. I would not refuse the gift of a new color TV set because I do not understand how the thing works, and its performance would not be affected by any erroneous views I might hold about video science. Just so one may know little of the theology about Christ, or he might even have a mistaken theology about him (such as supposing him to be a “created” being?), and still accept the gift that is offered with the knock at the door. And the gift will still “work” in spite of imperfections of understanding. The question then is whether we know Jesus Christ as the transforming Friend, not how much we know *about* him.

To walk with Christ as Enoch walked with God and to be a friend of Christ as Abraham was a friend of God is what makes us one together because that is what makes us Christians. We are not one in Christ simply because we are members of the same congregation or because we do the same things when we “worship” or because we’ve been baptized the same way. Oneness in Christ goes deeper than that. Those who have invited Jesus to make his home in their hearts and who reflect his living presence in their lives are the ones who are united in Christ.

Our troubled homes and troubled churches indicate that with all our religion we have failed to come to terms with the Friend who stands at the door and knocks. In their agonizing search for “something” our folk move from one congregation to another.

Divorces plague our ministers, elders, and deacons as well as their children. Most every church has a string of broken homes and heartbreaking tragedies. We live in luxury and yet we are poor. We have an abundance of everything but where is our joyous faith?

The answer is tragically simple. We are a people who have not accepted the free gift. We must stop trying so hard and come to see that being “right” about everything is a hopeless and fruitless effort.

The answer is in the knock at the door. The Friend who waits to enter will take all our burdens upon himself. His forgiving love will give us a glorious peace and an unspeakable joy. When we open the door and allow him to rule our hearts and lives we will have that victory that overcomes the world. If we will drop to our knees and do what we have probably never done in all our years as a Christian, *invite Jesus Christ into our hearts*, the gift of the presence of the living Christ will light up our lives and give us an assurance that can come no other way. And once that grace floods our soul we will be at peace with all others who have heard the knock and opened the door. —*the Editor*



A DEBATE WITH MY BUMPER STICKER

I have a thing about bumper stickers. I love to read them, and sometimes I venture too close to the car ahead in order to decipher one. They sometimes delight me, such as *Send Ross!*, which appeared on bumpers in the Dallas area during the Iranian hostage crisis, the reference being to Ross Perot, who is not only famous for his wealth but for his ability to *spring* people. And sometimes they are quietly amusing, such as *God Bless John Wayne*. And sometimes alarming, such as *Don't Settle for a Misconception*, which rode the bumper of an apparent abortionist. Bumper stickers are sometimes a fruitful field for satire, and some ACU students back in the 1960's were masters at it. They took aim at some of our Church of Christisms. I collected a few of them back in those days, such as:

See World's Largest Fossil Collection — In the Big Tent at ACC Lectureship

Don't Join - Be Added To

Attend the Church of My Choice

L. R. Wilson for Pope

The Family that Attends Worship Together Attends Worship Together

Don't Dance - Park

Well, that was back in the rebellious 1960's and surely those kids, now parents and nice church folk involved in the *status quo*, have since repented. But they came up with one sticker that is my favorite of them all, one that might well be reissued: *Support Law Enforcement — Pay Your Preacher Well*. What a swipe at our legalism from our confused youth starved for God's grace!

In spite of my infatuation with bumper stickers my car has never worn one, not until now that is. I received it through the mail from a publisher and was so enamoured of it that I went straight to my Toyoto and affixed it. My first bumper sticker ever! For some weeks now I have born its message to perhaps thousands. But I am now having second thoughts, and as I continually read and reread it as I walk to my car, I find myself debating with it. I am now not so sure that I believe it myself. I might even scrape it off. But maybe not. The debate goes on.

It reads *Be Happy — You Are Loved*.

The message has its truth. I often recount to my 11-year old grandson those who love him. It builds security, self-worthiness, and, yes, happiness. We all need to be loved, and what a tragedy it is for one to live in this evil world without being loved, or to suppose that he is unloved. The basic message of Scripture is that God loves us, even when we are sinners he loves us. So love is a basic ingredient to happiness. My bumper sticker bears an important, meaningful message. If for no other reason we should be happy because we are loved, particularly by the one who created us.

And yet the message is misleading, and maybe seriously so. It implies that our mission in this world is to be happy. It puts it in the imperative, *Be happy!*, as if happiness is simply a matter of our own will. The person in the car behind me can be transformed into a happy man while he waits for the light to change! My sticker may support the happiness cult, which is deluded into believing that happiness can be the subject of another one of those "How To" books.

Happiness, if defined in terms of a joyous and meaningful life, has a way of coming indirectly. It seems to elude those who seek it as a goal. As a nation we have sought wealth, pleasure, health, success, and security, and while we have attained these to a remarkable degree they have not brought us happiness. If we are the most powerful and most hedonistic nation on earth we are also the unhappiest. We are proof that happiness does not come from things, *thingification* as one philosopher put it.

As odd as it may appear, the happiest people are those who are not all that conscious of being happy. They are busy serving, loving, doing, caring, and should you ask them if they are happy the answer could be, “Well, yes, I suppose so, but I don’t give it much thought.” They don’t think about themselves that much! They are not in this world to be happy but to serve and be a blessing to suffering humanity. Jesus Christ must have been the “happiest” man in the history of the world, and yet he was called “a man of sorrows.” And it is he that gives us the beatitudes, which instead of telling us how to be happy tells us who is happy, the essence of which is *Blessed are those who serve*.

A serious flaw with my bumper sticker is that it urges one to think about how he is loved rather than to think in terms of loving others. St. Francis’ of Assisi was right when he prayed:

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much
Seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.*

Should I create a bumper sticker, a one-liner that says it all, it might be *People Are God’s Language*. If we desire to serve God, then let us serve people; if we love God, then let us love people; if we want fellowship with God, then let us reach out to people: if we would suffer with God, then let us suffer with people. The closer we are to people the closer we are to God. Happiness (joy and fulfillment) is the fruit of such a life. —*the Editor*



SILENCE SAYS SOMETHING

By Cecil Hook

Although our movement has developed the criteria of Scriptural command, approved example, and necessary inference for authoritative guidance, the most consistent thing about our use of that rule is our inconsistency in applying it. We avoid or “explain away” imperative instructions like “Greet one another with a holy kiss” and such commanded examples as that of washing of feet, and we have never been able to agree on what is

necessarily inferred. Some conclude confidently that the silence of the Scriptures concerning use of instrumental accompaniment to singing strongly infers that such is sinful, while others say that the silence infers that such is acceptable.

Frankly, I cannot believe that God would make eternal life or death dependent upon our ability or inability to judge inferences of a legal system. Sometimes, however, silence speaks and its message may be used as corroborative evidence. So, please let me make a point briefly that is supportive of that idea.

Throughout Old Testament history, God's people were warned against the pitfalls of the cultures about them. They were warned especially against the idolatry of the neighboring peoples. Some of the Mosaic regulations were in reaction to, and a safeguard against, the idolatry which was so popular and infectious in their world.

Jesus warned against popular and accepted evils such as outward show of lordship by religious leaders. He corrected the common notion that God worship was to be centered in Jerusalem or Samaria.

The letter composed and sent out by the Jerusalem conferences to the Gentile disciples was no attempt to define all sinful activities, but it was a warning against prevalent and accepted evils among the pagans such as sexual unchastity and eating things sacrificed to idols, blood, and what is strangled.

Various lists of sins are given in the epistles. Why were they not exhaustive lists and all alike? Each particular list included the prevalent sins threatening the ones being addressed. Paul's instructions concerning women identifying with the cult priestesses by headdress and insubordination, for instance, were not given in all his epistles but to the Corinthians and Ephesians where these were local threats. Paul warned the Thessalonians against idle, non-productive lives because that was a sin characteristic of that city.

In the latter part of New Testament history, the great philosophical threat to Christianity among the Gentiles was Gnosticism. John deals extensively with their teachings in his epistles, and Paul gives warnings also in letters to Timothy and the Colossians.

Now, let me get to my point about instrumental accompaniment to singing. Such music was generally accepted in all societies. The Jews were familiar with the temple orchestra or band dating back through the centuries. David encouraged the use of instruments in

praise and he wrote some psalms to the Chief Musician to be accompanied by a specified instrument. The Jews of the First Century used those psalms and Paul encouraged Christian use of psalms.

If I should tell you that I heard Willie Nelson sing in a concert last night, you would not conclude that he sang a cappella due to the fact that I did not mention that he played his guitar also. Because accompaniment is so common, when mention is made of singing, accompaniment is taken for granted unless the exception is mentioned. So it would be with mention of the singing of Psalms.

No doubt, the pagans sang some good secular songs, but it would be more characteristic of them to sing the bawdy, sexually oriented songs of the drinking party. This would be a cultural temptation to disciples. In facing this, Paul did not forbid singing at social gatherings, but he urged that they use such occasions to teach, exhort, and upbuild one another by using psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs influenced by the Holy Spirit rather than alcoholic spirits. His instructions (Eph. 5:18f; Col. 3:16f) give no indication that he is dealing with church assemblies, but the contexts reveal that he is dealing with social relationships.

In view of the common use of instrumental accompaniment, both among the Jews and other societies, posing a universal threat, if such were sinful, it seems imperative that Paul and other inspired writers would have warned the disciples against that ever-present threat to their souls. Many lists are given to identify sins prevalent in their society, but the use of instruments in praise is not in one of the lists! The silence says something!

It says that it was a matter of indifference. —*1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Texas*
78130



To cultivate kindness is a valuable part of the business of life. —*Samuel Johnson*

The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love. —*William Wordsworth*



Personally Speaking

Ouida and I want to thank our readers for their loving response to our notice in the last issue of the death of our son Philip, and we realize that this applies to those who did not write as well as to those who did. We decided that we would try to make a personal reply to all those who sent condolences, but we may not get around to everyone, so we use this means to express our gratitude.

We were impressed that so many of the cards and letters thanked us for sharing our sorrow, and several thought we showed moral courage in telling the public that our son had died of AIDS. Several thought that this would provide support and comfort to others who are devastated either directly or indirectly by this disease that is well nigh an epidemic, and that by sharing it we helped to inform the public how vulnerable we all are to this vicious malady.

The letters that touched me the deepest were from aged sisters who recalled the loss of a child when they were young mothers, some as long ago as a half century. One sister wrote that even after fifty years she could still see in her mind's eye her little boy in his coffin. Such testimonials convinced us all the more that our heavenly Father will use such agonizing sorrow to mold us into the loving and caring souls that he wants us to be.

While Ouida underwent some depression during the ordeal, she has bounced back and is busy caring for her mother and helping me in our workshop. I am as busy as I have ever been, especially since I am teaching courses in American studies at both the University of Dallas (Roman Catholic) and Dallas Christian College (Christian Church) this fall. The call to help the University of Dallas was rather urgent since they lost a professor at a late date, and the one who called, a departmental chairman, was one of my graduate students at Texas Woman's University twenty years ago. It delights her when I tell it on campus that she who was once my student is now my boss. She is, by the way, a member of the Church of Christ. The majority of the faculty at the University of Dallas is nonRoman Catholic. It impresses me as being as ecumenical as Harvard. I appreciate its emphasis on the liberal arts and its policy of not feeling obligated to field a football team, an oddity for a Texas university.

This is my second year to teach a course at Dallas Christian College, which has some of the most dedicated faculty I have ever met, and I have fallen in love with the students who really have that *esprit de corps*. They are, however, reluctant to read their assignments in American history, so I give them a short quiz each time we meet!

That is enough to indicate that we are fairly well on track at 1201 Windsor Dr. We would appreciate your helping us to increase the circulation of this journal. We have only a few years left and we would like to make them the most productive years of all. — *the Editor*



OUR CHANGING WORLD

In a recent issue of *Image* Charles Hodge observed that as people change, motivated by conviction rather than by conditioning, they will become less judgmental of others and more critical of themselves. Hardly anything would do as much for Churches of Christ than for this suggestion, coming from one of our most respected ministers, to be taken seriously. We are badly in need of critical introspection and self-examination. It is surely a sound thesis that the more Christlike we become the less judgmental of others we will be. Brother Hodge has answered a critical question, *What must the Churches of Christ do to be saved?*

In a recent article that took note of a growing openness of fellowship among Churches of Christ, especially in reference to unity efforts with Christian Churches, *Mission* recommended that recognition should be given to the pioneering efforts of Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. The writer suggested with apparent seriousness that Abilene Christian University should give honorary degrees to these men. While I try to heed the wisdom of William James and “imagine foreign states of mind,” I have difficulty conjuring up a mental image of ACU conferring an honorary degree on Carl Ketcherside. And I have even greater difficulty imagining Carl accepting an honorary degree from ACU or any other college! A university that fires an honored science teacher for attending the wrong church and has a problem in being candid about what is taught in *its* biology department concerning evolution is not yet ready to provide the moral leadership required in encouraging Churches of Christ to listen to those who call for change. But this is not really within the province of any college. Let the church honor its prophets if they are to be honored. But the *Mission* article was nonetheless gracious, and, certainly in the case of Carl Ketcherside, appropriate and an honor in itself, much more than an honorary degree could ever be, which at best is a rather shallow thing.

The Overtown Church of Christ in Miami, a black congregation, has issued a letter of withdrawal of fellowship from Ivory James, Jr. and Leroy Garrett. I am included because I stood up with Ivory when he was assaulted by his own black brethren. Among the charges is that we believe there are Christians in churches other than Churches of Christ and that instrumental music should not be made a test of fellowship. The bull is signed by the elders of the Overtown church, a congregation that I have never even visited, much less held membership. My understanding of Church of Christ polity, which is of course the same as what the Bible teaches, is that a person is responsible only to the congregation where he has membership. If a church does not formally or officially receive one into its fellowship, then it cannot expel one from its membership. Ivory can be disciplined only by his own congregation, which is in Riviera Beach, Florida, and I only by the congregation in Denton, Texas where I am a member. If the church in Miami has the right to excommunicate someone living in Texas, why not California and New York as well, or the entire world for that matter? That makes Miami the Holy See with power to loose and bind anywhere. But taking the bull for what it says, they are obliged to withdraw from the majority of folk in Churches of Christ, for most of our people believe there are Christians besides those in Churches of Christ, and while they choose to remain acappella in singing they do not believe that the use of an instrument should be made a test of fellowship. But here we have one more sign that the black Church of Christ is somewhere back in the 1930's or 1940's. But even they are doing some changing, otherwise they would not have to be issuing bulls of excommunication. No one kicks a dead horse.

In his *California Letter*, which you can get by writing to Box 811, Corcoran, CA 93212, J. James Albert, who works among the non-class, one-cup churches (I think I have that right) names three traits of the legalist, whom he continually seeks to introduce to the grace of God: (1) He trusts in himself rather than in God; (2) He is a faultfinder; (3) He seeks to domineer. The editor sees legalism as the deluding ministry of Satan.

While Churches of Christ remain among those denominations that have done little to liberate women from second-class citizenship in the church, there are a few signs of hope. The entire issue of a recent *Strategy*, published by the ACU Center of Missions Education, was given over to "Single Women on the Mission Field." All the testimonials are from women who are or have been in the mission field. One of them writes, "There are tremendous blessings in store for any woman who decides to do some mission work," which doesn't sound exactly like us.



READERS' EXCHANGE

I hope my sunset years will last years longer, but we may be gone tomorrow. There is a lot of work I want to do. I am working on an autobiography. I shall not tell you who it is about. — *James D. Bales, Searcy, AR.*

The notion that our Church of Christ is an exact replica of the New Testament church is as ludicrous as the man who claimed that an axe he had in his possession had been in the family for a hundred years. Upon being questioned closely, it was discovered that the axe that his grand-father had owned had had four handles and two heads. Brethren, God has millions of Christians who never heard of Barton Stone, Alexander Campbell or Marshall Keeble. — *Ivory James, Jr., Riviera Beach, FL* (In a speech at Gold Coast Restoration Forum, Miami)

The Church of Christ that I attended last Sunday had a sermon that really surprised me. You could not have improved on what was said. They used to be an “us only” group but they have become non-judgmental of brothers who differ in opinions. — *Margaret Williams, San Angelo, TX.*

(We can take heart that there is an increasing number of reports like this. We are at last tiring of our sectarianism and are hungering for something more. — *Ed.*)

When will we learn to show mercy? When will we become patient until others have time to learn? When will we accept the fact that in some things we are wrong ourselves? None of us is a perfect composite of all truth. We have decided that we have it, and that if others want it they can come to us and get it. *Reuel Lemmons in Image (Reproduced in Pulpit Helps, August, 1986)*

(Many are encouraged that a Church of Christ publication is saying things like this. That it is picked up by the general church press shows that we will be listened to when we show more openness. But I admit to a bit of curiosity as to what Brother Lemmons would name when he concedes that the Church of Christ is wrong about some things. Have we been wrong, for instance, in making instrumental music a test of fellowship? Have we been wrong in claiming to be the one and only true church? Have we been wrong in claiming to be the only true Christians? Have we been wrong in saying that we are not a denomination while all others are? Those who would lead us to green pastures might help us more if they would be more like the way insurance policies read, to wit. We have been wrong, *namely* . . . When a prophet starts *naming* his people's sins, he really gets their attention — sometimes more than he asks for! — *Ed.*)

The things I'm reading in *Restoration Review*, *One Body*, *Integrity*, and *Image* are encouraging for the most part. I'm not quite so pessimistic as I was for awhile. God will work it all out His way, I'm sure. We just don't want to miss His boat! — *L. A. Boyll, Indianapolis, In.*



BOOK NOTES

We continue to sell our bound volumes and we are pleased that we still have volumes dating back to 1977. These are handsomely finished hardbound matching volumes with gold print and dust jacket. Each volume has its own title, such as *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977), \$5.95; *The Ancient Order* (1978), \$5.95; *Blessed Are the Peacemakers* and *With All the Mind* (1979-80), \$9.95; *Jesus Today* (1981-82), \$9.95; *The Doe of the Dawn* (1983-84), \$9.95. We have a special price of only \$35.00 for all five volumes covering eight years, postpaid.

The Bible Speaks to You by Robert McAfee Brown is a veritable goldmine of relevant information about the Bible and its meaning for us. He deals with such questions as to how God makes himself known, why people wanted to kill Jesus, why it isn't enough to live a good life, what happens when I die. You will delight in this book. \$9.50 postpaid.

You have heard about the rapture, but it may be a confusing subject to you. William R. Kimball's *The Rapture: A Question of Timing* treats the subject in the framework of "the blessed hope" and its meaning. It is a fair, objective, informative study of a crucial part of Scripture. \$6.50 postpaid.

Those interested in studying non-Christian religions can read *Christian Faith and Other Faiths* by the late Stephen Neill, an Oxford scholar who always wrote good stuff. The reading may be a bit heavy but if you will work at it you will be treated to the beliefs and perplexities of other religions. He even deals with those who have no faith and secularism. \$7.95 postpaid.

The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible may well be the best of its kind, wellwritten and thorough, 450 illustrations. Oodles of information. \$22.95 postpaid.

Robert Schuller's *The Be Happy Attitudes* gives you eight positive attitudes that can transform your life. It shows how relevant and exciting Jesus's beatitudes can be when applied to our attitudes. He gives a lot of thoughtful one-liners like "I'd rather change my

mind and succeed than have my own way and fail,” and “God’s care will carry you so you can carry others.” \$12.95 postpaid.

For the youngsters we highly recommend Amy Grant’s *Heart to Heart Bible Stories*. \$9.95 postpaid.

We are sometimes asked if any of Carl Ketcherside’s book are still in print. We have one title available, *That the World May Believe*, which is a reprint of his *The Death of the Custodian*, which is a study of the covenants. This is a suitable paperback to pass along to serious students, and so we are offering them at three for \$5.00, postage paid.

Some of our newer readers might be interested in what we have said years ago. We will send you a packet of 18 back issues, selected at random, for only \$4.00, postpaid, mailed out only once a month when we mail the paper.

Our older readers (and younger ones, too) will appreciate a book on growing older with meaning and hope, which has a chapter on “Growing Older Instead of Old” and another on “Spiritual Resources for Aging.” The book is *Vintage Years* by William E. Hulme, who tells stories about aging people as he makes his points. \$10.95 postpaid.

Who Do Americans Say That I Am? is a message to how we might infuse new life into the churches based upon information drawn from polls in reference to what our neighbors believe about Jesus Christ. The polls reveal that churches are not adequately meeting the spiritual needs of people. To say the least, we are likely to minister to people more effectively if we know what they believe about Jesus. This is a challenging book. \$9.95 postpaid.

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